



St. Paul's comfortable Reflection and
Prospect, in view of Death,

141.
Considered in a

Funeral SERMON

F O R

Mrs. *ANNE KING*,

Who died *Aug. 9.*

Preached *Aug. 14. 1726.*

By *JOHN EVANS.* *R*

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Prospect in view of Death

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LONDON:

Printed by John Clarke and Richard Smith
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Charles. M. D. C. C. L. V. I.

2 TIM. IV. 7, 8.

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.

Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

THESE words are offered to present consideration, at the desire of an aged member of this Christian Society, upon occasion of the death of *his* excellent and aged consort, Mrs. *Anne King*: Who was not only the most intimate companion of his life in the married State for above 54 years; but an *old disciple* too, and an attendant with this congregation in all christian ordinances for the same time. I was easily induced, when desired to say something for the improvement of her removal to those that survive, to comply with the motion of making

this text the subject, from my own knowledge of her in the later years of her life, and from the unvarying testimony of all her acquaintance, from whom I ever had opportunity to be informed of her character.

They are indeed the words of the great apostle of the Gentiles; who, as an apostle, had a special warfare to manage; a particular course to finish; and a concern, peculiar to himself and such extraordinary messengers of Christ, for the preservation of the faith: And he was, I believe, the most illustrious instance, of any meer man, of the power of Christianity in all the active and passive excellencies of it. And therefore in his case, the words may be supposed to contain a more sublime sense, than is applicable to Christians of a common rank, even tho' of great exactness and eminence in their kind.

But the apostle seems designedly to prevent such a confinement of the sense of this passage, by the last words, *And not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing*. Wherein he plainly intimates, that tho' he had spoken in his own person, yet he would not have it thought, that he speaks of a recompence (and by consequence of a course of faithful service leading to it,) of which only apostles or ministers were capable; but of a matter, in which all sincere Christians might think themselves concerned, as well as he.

I account my self therefore fully warranted by *St. Paul*, to take such a general and comprehensive view of what is said here, as will make it apposite to Christians in a private life, as well as to an apostle.

Paul the aged was now in the near view of another world: As he declares in ver. 6. *I am now*

ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. He had an immediate prospect of his approaching martyrdom under Nero. He was not ignorant of the steps taking in order to such an end of his course by his enemies at Rome; or, (as Grotius and others probably conjecture,) he had a divine premonition, that his death was near. In such circumstances, like a wise and serious Christian, he set himself to review his past life and conduct, as the best rule for judging what was like to be his condition for ever; and then looked forward to the world before him, to animate him for his last conflict. The blessed result of these meditations he communicates to his son Timothy in the text, *I have fought, &c.*

There is a frequent allusion in the new testament to the famous Grecian exercises, in describing both the *life* and the *reward* of Christians. And these two verses in particular are full of them. The Greeks had four famous games, wherein the competitors strove for the victory; which were all in common called by the name, that we translate *fight*, ἀγών. What we render *course*, δρόμος, was one sort of their exercises, namely, *racing*. To *finish the course*, was to perform the race. Then for those who won, there was a *crown lay ready*, as a reward of honour to the conqueror; and this *crown was given* or adjudged to the conqueror, when the exercise was over, by the βεβήτης, the judge who was appointed to determine to whom the prize was due according to the laws of the exercise. To these customs the apostle here, as well as elsewhere, plainly alludes. But waving that, the words consist of two branches.

It is not therefore a reflection inconsistent with acknowledging that I. St.

I. *St. Paul's cheerful reflection upon his past life in this world.* Which must be understood since his conversion to Christianity. This is contained in ver. 7.

II. *His joyful prospect thereupon for the world before him.* That is the subject of the 8th verse.

I shall endeavour to explain both these distinctly, as far as a single discourse will admit : And then make improvement of the whole in some practical inferences.

I. We have *St. Paul's cheerful reflection upon his past life in this world.* And it is the concern of every Christian to be able in the view of eternity to make the same reflection, according to his or her rank and place.

This is not the language of a proud *Pharisee*, boasting of his own excellencies ; to magnify himself, and to pour contempt upon others : But the comfortable testimony of a man's own conscience, excusing and acquitting him upon a serious examination of himself according to the rule of the gospel.

Nor is it to be understood as a pretence to absolute perfection. This apostle disclaims any such apprehension. *Not as tho' I had already attained, either were already perfect,* Phil. iii. 12. But it is the declaration of a man, conscious of his own sincerity and integrity, believing the gracious allowances of the gospel for lamented imperfections.

It is not therefore a reflection inconsistent with the deepest humility ; with acknowledging both
his

his own absolute unworthiness of the blessings promised, and his entire obligation to divine grace for all the good that was in him or done by him. For this same apostle breaths the most affecting strains of humility : That he was *less than the least of all saints*, Eph. iii. 8. That *by the grace of God he was what he was*, 1 Cor. xv. 10. But notwithstanding his unfeigned humility, he was able to pass a true judgment of his own character ; according to that gospel, which was made the rule of his own judgment, and was declared to be the rule by which his master would proceed in judging him at last.

This he could say ; *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.* wherein we may consider the Christian life as represented in three views : As a *warfare*, or a struggle with enemies and difficulties : As a *course* or race, an active and continued exercise : And as principally animated by *faith*. And a Christian's due behaviour in this life is described, by *having fought that fight, finished that course, and kept that faith.*

I shall briefly consider each.

First, The Christian life is a *fight* or *warfare*. In that it is attended with many enemies and difficulties, which will be continually opposing us in our way ; and must be overcome, if we would reach our end.

There are many standing enemies in the way of vital Christianity in every age and the best state of things : The snares of the devil, the custom and example of a present evil world, and the enjoyments of life or allurements of sense. As long as we continue in this state, where the usurping God of this world hath so much power, he will
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be making his assaults upon us, either as a roaring lion, or an old serpent; endeavouring to gain an advantage over us. And his great power and influence, his subtilty and long experience, his restless activity and indefatigable application, make it a matter of great difficulty to overcome him. *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, weak enemies only, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high-places, Eph. vi. 12.* And then, *the whole world* (the main body of it,) *lies in wickedness; or in the wicked one, 1 Jo. v. 19.* under the power and dominion of the head of the apostacy. *He worketh in them, Eph. ii. 2.* and *they are led captive by him at his will, 2 Tim. ii. 26.* So that *the works of their father they do:* And the prevailing course and custom of an evil world runs directly opposite to the business of a Christian. This goes a great way to make his life a warfare; he must go against the stream, act out of the fashion, and in many things be content to be singular; if he should be exposed to no greater inconveniences by it. The allurements of sense still farther increase the occasion for conflict. They continually surround us, and have a suitableness to our animal appetites and inclinations. There is a part within our selves ready to side with them, earthly affections, a carnal mind. *Fleshly lusts war against our souls, 1 Pet. ii. 11.* So that we are obliged to the continual difficulty of maintaining a conflict with our own selves.

In the most peaceful state of the church, Christians have such a difficult warfare upon their hands. But at some times, beside all this, they may be exposed farther to *a great fight of afflictions*, as the apostle's expression is, *Heb. x. 32.* to many Suffer-

ings

ings for righteousness sake. They may be called to *withstand in an evil day*. This was particularly the case of the primitive Christians, eminently of Paul himself. They had this conflict, with reproaches, with imprisonment, with the spoiling of their goods, with bodily punishments, with death it self; superadded to the constant oppositions of the spiritual enemies of their souls. And such frequently hath been the case of Christians in following ages. And Christ hath taught all his disciples to take even these conflicts into their reckoning, as things possible to befall them. No wonder then, that the christian life is represented as a *fight* or warfare.

But then it is a *good warfare* on the Christian's part; or as it should rather be rendred, *the good fight*. For in the original there is a double article, both before the substantive and the epithet, to bespeak the greater emphasis; of which the genius of our language will not admit. Τὸν ἀγῶνα τὸν καλόν. This is by way of eminency *the good fight*, the best of all warfares.

It is *in the best cause*; the cause of God and conscience, in defence of the purity, the peace, and the final interests of our Souls.

It is *against the worst enemies*. The opposition in this warfare may be summed up in this one thing, it is against sin. *Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin*, Hebr. xii. 4. The Christian's fight is a striving against sin; and against the world and the devil, only as they would lead him to sin; that is, against the worst evil in the world, and the source of all other evils.

It is a warfare *under the best conduct*; under the banner of Christ; who went before us in

it, and is still at our head in the management of it.

It is a fight, wherein we have had for our predecessors, or now have for our companions, all the excellents of the earth.

The Christian life then is a fight against formidable enemies and many difficulties; but it is the good fight.

Now happy they, who at the close of life can look back, and say, they have fought this fight: Which will include in it such things as these.

1st. A hearty and determinate resolution to engage in this warfare. It is not enough to minister comfort, that we were laid under engagements to it by others in our baptism, or that by retaining the profession of Christianity we seem *our selves* to be on Christ's side, or that we have made some faint opposition at times to some particular sins and temptations: Which are things that too many content themselves with. But have we ever, upon serious thought of the necessity of the matter, come to a hearty determination, in the strength of Christ to make it the business of our lives to oppose the world, the flesh and the devil? This is in other words to be *turned from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God*, Act. xxvi. 18. And to be *delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear son*, Col. i. 13. This is a change of masters, which will minister comfort in a dying hour; a *repentance never to be repented of*. It includes farther,

2^{dly}, An habitual opposition maintained against all known interruptions in our course. That it is our ordinary care and endeavour, as far as we are acquainted with Satan's devices, to prevent his gaining

gaining an advantage. That we are usually on our guard, that we may not be led away by the error of the wicked, nor removed from our steadfastness by the allurements or terrors of life. That customarily we keep our heart with diligence, and employ our selves in mortifying the deeds of the body. A comfortable reflection, that we have fought a good fight, must imply a consciousness that *herein we have exercised our selves.*

3^{dly}, That for the main we have kept our ground. That is, that notwithstanding infirmities and imperfections, we have so far succeeded in the conflict, as not to be prevailed upon to relinquish our master, and give over our design for heaven. This was the Psalmist's cheerful review, *Pf. xviii. 21, 22. I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God. For all his judgments were before me, and I did not put away his statutes from me.* That we generally prevail in opposing particular temptations, tho' not always. That no sin obtains a customary victory over us: Without that we must want evidence of our sincerity. *Whatsoever is born of God, doth not commit sin, 1 Jo. iii. 9.* Such a person doth not make a practice of any known sin.

4^{thly}, That whenever we have been overcome in a particular conflict, we resumed our weapons and overcame again. If we have fallen, we rose again by proportionable repentance. Where there is a principle of goodness, this is ordinarily done soon; and with eminent bitterness and sorrow. Like *Peter*, such a one will weep bitterly, fervently apply to God in Christ for pardoning mercy, and to restore his soul; and endeavour, as far as possible, to undo what he hath done amiss, and to regain the ground he has lost. Where this hath

not been speedily and solemnly done, it hath greatly abated the comfort of death-bed reflections. It will greatly add to the comfort of all that hath been already said, if in the review of our warfare, we can also discern,

5^{thly}, That we are tending nearer to a compleat victory, the longer we have maintained the fight. That the power and efforts of indwelling sin are feebler than formerly. That holy dispositions have more of the ascendant. That temptations are less prevalent, sin more feared and hated, and the world in its smiles and frowns more like a crucified thing to us. And once more, to this comfortable reflection it is necessary,

6^{thly}, That we have continued in this warfare from our entrance upon it, and are found prevailing in it at the time of our reflection. The only soldier, that will be crowned by our great Master, is one that continues the fight, till his warfare is accomplished, and till the captain of his salvation gives him his *quietus*. He must not quit the field while he is amidst enemies, nor till his gracious Master summons him away, and says, come up hither. He only therefore can make this pleasing review, who, at the time of his making it, hath the testimony of his conscience, that he has not yet laid down his arms.

I proceed to the second thing in the apostle's reflection; wherein,

Secondly, The Christian life is described as a *course* or *race*. Which represents it as a very active exercise, wherein much work is to be done in a little time.

Thus every Christian hath, A general course to run in common with all other Christians; And a particular

particular course to himself, resulting from his particular circumstances.

A *general course*, in common with all other Christians. Every Christian is to live in the religious fear and worship of God: To attain, and improve, and exercise all the fruits of the Spirit, all the virtues becoming the human nature; whereby he may bear the image of God and the Redeemer, may do good in the world, and may have his soul in a growing meetness and a proper dress for entering upon the heavenly state. It is incumbent upon every Christian to behave as a pilgrim and stranger here, waiting and preparing for death and judgment. But beside this general course to be run, there is

A *particular course*, assigned to every Christian by himself, according to the different Circumstances of his case; according to the degree of his capacity and opportunity; according to the peculiar talents with which he is intrusted; the stations and relations in which he is placed; and the providences of God, either merciful or afflictive, in the day and place where his lot is cast. Thus *Paul's* peculiar work was that of an apostle. Others are called to magistracy; and some to serve Christ in the ordinary work of the ministry. And others, who are only in private life, have many special duties pointed out to them, by providence bringing them into particular relations as members of a family, and by the word of God appointing the duties of such relations. Now as to the particular race we have to run, our concern is to acquit our selves well, in that which God has made our own.

Now happy is he, that in the view of another world can say, he *has finished or completed his course.*

course. Which may imply in it such things as these.

1st. That he hath attended *impartially* to all the parts of the course or race assigned him. That is comprehended in *compleating* his course: That not only some particular branches of duty have been minded; not only duty to God or to man; but both. That *herein we have exercised our selves, to keep a conscience void of offence both towards God and towards men.* Act. xxiv. 16. That neither the general duties of all Christians are neglected; nor the particular work wherein God calls us to honour him and serve our generation, whether it be more publick or more private, more honourable or more obscure.

2^{dly}, That he has used *diligence* and application to perform the several parts of his work *in the best manner*: That, tho' nothing we do hath absolute perfection, or is absolutely a finished piece; yet we *do not the work* assigned us *negligently*; but endeavour to acquit our selves, both in the work of our general and particular calling, as much as we can, to the honour of God, the benefit of those with whom we are concerned, and the satisfaction of our own minds.

3^{dly}, That he is making a progress nearer and nearer towards the end of his race. In a race, if we go the right way towards the mark in view, every step brings us nearer to it. We are all too apt to turn aside to crooked paths in the Christian race: Who can say, that every step he takes, is a tendency toward the end of his faith and hope? Yet still the performing of our race, with all gospel-allowances for infirmity, implies a gradual approach upon the whole towards the compleat holiness and happiness we have in view. It

is the character of the path of the just, and without it the pleasure of dying reflections will be greatly interrupted, that it is like the shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day, Prov. iv. 18.

4^{thly}, That he holds on and perseveres in this course. It cannot indeed be said to be completely finished by any, till actual death. But we can never reflect upon it with comfort, unless till that time, when we reflect upon it, conscience can testify that we have not given it over: That we allow not our selves to be weary and faint in our minds, to be weary of well-doing: That we are still running with patience the race that is set before us, Hebr. xii. 1. And determined by the grace of God still to do so, till we have reached the point in view.

Thirdly, The Christian life is described, as animated by faith. So the Scripture often represents it. *The life, which I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God*, Gal. ii. 20. *We walk by faith, and not by sight*, 2 Cor. v. 7. So the apostle presses Timothy, 1 Tim. vi. 12. *Fight the good fight of faith*: That is, that good fight, which hath faith for the principle of it.

The Christian life is principally animated by faith, that is,

By the truths proposed to our faith in the gospel. And,

By the exercise of faith upon those truths.

No considerations are so proper and apposite to excite to zeal and ardor in fighting the Christian warfare, and running the Christian race, as the doctrines of Christianity it self; by their influence either upon our gratitude, or our hope, or our fear. But then, that which alone will make them

them effectual for such a purpose, is a firm and lively faith in them.

Happy he then, that in the view of another world can recollect this as the testimony of his conscience, that he *hath kept the faith*. That is,

1st, That he hath kept close to the gospel, as the rule and foundation of his faith. That he hath conscientiously endeavoured by frequent and diligent searches into the word of God to learn from thence what God would have him to believe: That his faith is not taken up upon trust; but he can appeal to God, that he hath endeavoured to form it from his Bible, without allowed prepossessions, in the faithful use of the means in his power to understand the mind of God, and with fervent prayers to the Father of lights for light and guidance. This will be a solid support to a good man in the midst of differing opinions about one or another particular doctrine; because it is certain, that a man thus disposed and thus acting will never be left to any fatal mistake.

2^{dly}, That, as far as he hath been convinced of the mind of God, he hath *held fast the profession of his faith without wavering*; according to the exhortation, *Hebr. x. 23*. Hath not suffered himself to be ashamed of it, or to disown it, in the least instance, in order to please men, or to avoid persecution. This is a homage we owe to truth and the God of truth, and which will minister comfort in our last hours.

3^{dly}, That he hath kept up the exercise of his faith, to animate Christian practice. That he hath not *held the truth in unrighteousness*; but as he endeavoured to have a right faith, so he made it his business; so to strengthen and exercise his persuasion

fusion of divine truths; that each of them might have their proper influence upon his heart and life.

I have thus gone thro' the first branch of my text, as distinctly as the narrow bounds of time would allow upon so copious a subject. I must contract my self more upon the other noble branch remaining.

II. The apostle's joyful prospect hereupon for the world before him. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge will give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

Henceforth, λοιπόν, for what remains. As if he had said, 'My conscience bears me witness, that I have been enabled thro' grace to do my part in an upright measure; and I doubt not but the master I have served is faithful to perform his that is yet behind.'

In this confident hope, which the apostle expresses, we may briefly remark,

I. The manner of his expectation. *A crown of righteousness.* The heavenly happiness is evidently the thing intended; which is represented here by the emblem of a crown, agreeable (as was before observed) to the allusion to the *Grecian* exercises, which the apostle keeps in view all along in this description; wherein laurel crowns were conferred upon the conquerors, as a mark of distinguishing honour. In another place he uses the same allusion, but elegantly observes the preference of the crown expected by the Christian. 1 Cor. ix. 25. *Every man, that striveth for the mastery,* (ἀγωνίζεσθαι, the same word which is

here rendred fighting,) is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible. The future happiness is recommended in scripture by many amiable emblems, the more effectually to impress our minds: Among which this of a crown is often made use of, especially to describe the *honour* and *dignity* which will hereafter be conferred upon the faithful.

It is sometimes called a *crown of glory*, 1 Pet. v. 4. or a most glorious crown. Elsewhere a *crown of life*, Jam. i. 12. Rev. ii. 10. It will be life and bliss to the possessor, and will last for ever. And here a *crown of righteousness*. Either pointing to the way, in which God hath provided for conferring it, in consistence with his own honour, upon penitent Sinners. In virtue of the propitiation of Christ, *God is just*, when he is the *justifier*, and so when he is the glorifier, of him that *believeth in Jesus*, Rom. iii. 25, 26. Or intimating it to be a reward, tho' a reward of grace, of the sincere, tho' imperfect righteousness of his servants: A reward due by his promise, tho' not by their desert. In which respect the apostle says, 2 Thess. i. 6, 7. that it is a righteous thing with God to recompence to them that are troubled (for righteousness sake) rest.

2. The security of the happiness expected, before it was conferred. He could look upon it as laid up. It appeared not to sense, it was hid; but yet it was preserved safe, and forth-coming. As our life is said to be hid with Christ in God, Col. iii. 3. So the inheritance is said to be reserved in heaven for us, 1 Pet. i. 4.

3. The donor of it, the Lord the righteous judge. It is plain, that Christ is here intended; for God hath committed all judgment to the Son. Jo. v. 22.

He,

He, in whom the Christian believes, whom he hath trusted with his all, whose he is, and whom he serves, under whose banner he fought the good fight, to whom he looked as his leader while he ran the Christian race, whose faith he kept; He is to be his judge: And that very thought may well be a strong confirmation of his hope. Especially since he is *the righteous judge*. Not that he will proceed with strict rigour according to his servants' deserts: That would extinguish all their hopes. But so righteous, as to be faithful to his own promises and engagements. If they are *faithful unto death*, he has given them his word, that *he will give them a crown of life*, Rev. ii. 10. And therefore they may depend upon it.

4. The time of conferring it. *In that day*. He will put them in possession of a real happiness at their death. The apostle was confident of this, when he declares that to depart hence was *far better* for him, than a stay below, *Phil. i. 23*. But the consummate blessedness of Christ's servants is reserved to the great judgment-day; which is eminently and emphatically stiled more than once *that day*. Then all the faithful shall, in soul and body, receive their consummate bliss.

5. The apostle's satisfying appropriation of this bliss to himself. *The crown is laid up for me*: And, *the righteous judge will give it to me*. It will be but a poor comfort in a dying hour, to believe that there is a future happiness, unless we can entertain hopes that we are to have a share in it; unless we can consider it as our own, as belonging to us. This cannot reasonably be concluded, unless we have *the testimony of our consciences, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have*
C 2 *had*

had our conversation in the world: That will be rejoicing indeed, 2 Cor. 1. 12. Yet we have also,

6. His joyful declaration of the extending of the same blessedness to all other sincere Christians. *And not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.* We may consider this, either as an apostolical declaration, or as a part of his joyful prospect.

As an apostolical declaration; it contains a very comfortable assurance to all good men, that they may entertain a like hope with the apostle, if the character annexed belongs to them. This is not only the privilege of an apostle; of one so eminent in gifts and graces, in services and sufferings, as *St. Paul* was; but Christians of the meanest rank, who never had capacity or opportunity to do such service to the Christian interest, as he did, yet, if they are sincere and faithful, may depend also upon a crown of righteousness. Indeed as one star differs from another star in glory; so there will be different degrees of glory; crowns of different eminence and lustre, conferred according to the different degrees of mens grace and usefulness, and of their sufferings for Christ. But *all that love Christ's appearing*, may depend upon a share in the heavenly happiness. That is, all who fix their main blessedness in that happiness, which is to be conferred at Christ's second coming; who thereupon live expecting it and preparing for it, by fighting the good fight, running the Christian race, and keeping the faith: For none but such can reasonably *love Christ's appearing*, or look upon it as a desirable and delightful prospect.

As this is a part of the apostle's joyful prospect; that the righteous judge would give a crown to all that love Christ's appearing, as well as to himself; so it bespeaks the fulness of the heavenly happiness; that the happiness of one will not diminish the felicity of another. Which is the case in worldly good; and was the case in the Grecian exercises, to which the apostle alludes, where in a particular game, only one that conquered all the rest could be crowned. It also bespeaks the publick spirit of a Christian. He is far from desiring to confine the blessings of the gospel to himself. On the contrary he earnestly wishes to have them spread far and wide, and greatly rejoices when he can have hope that they are so. How beautifully does this apostle express such a temper before king Agrippa! *Act. xxvi. 29. I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me, this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.* And somewhat of a like spirit is in every genuine Christian: All such heartily pray, and vigorously endeavour to bring others to heaven along with them, especially those under their care and charge. It is their sorrow, when they have reason to fear, that their prayers in this respect are not answered, and their endeavours unsuccessful. On the other hand, it gives a vast additional joy even to a dying saint, if he can have hope, that those especially, for whom he hath a particular concern, are likely to follow him to heaven.

Having run out to so great a length in explaining this very copious passage of scripture, I will not detain you long in the application.

1. We may observe, that every warning of mortality, and especially the near approaches of death to our selves, should eminently excite to a careful enquiry, how we have behaved in life, and whither we are going. Death, whether we see it carrying others off, or feel it *working* in us, or see it making approaches by any other way towards us, is so awful and decisive a change, that certainly it calls aloud to see, on what ground we stand, in what state we are, and what is like to become of us afterwards. It is wisdom indeed to have these accounts always plain and clear, even in youth and health, because death may soon make a seizure without warning. But if great dangers are in view, or age shews that the graves are ready for us, and yet such enquiries are neglected, we must be chargeable with the greatest stupidity. And even where this has not been an enquiry omitted thro' life, yet the importance of the matter makes it to deserve a review, when the time of our departure seems at hand, for the greater safety and comfort in a dying hour. This prospect set *Paul* in the text upon such a look backward and forward, as hath been described.

2. The best foundation of a well-grounded prospect for another world, is a consciousness of our own integrity in life. So these stand connected in the apostle's triumphant declaration.

Such only, who have fought the good fight, run their race, and kept the faith, can *found a hope upon the gospel-constitution*. And I know not any other foundation for a sinner's hope. *Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord: But the pure in heart shall see God. Be not deceived; God*

is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting, Gal. vi. 7, 8. God will render to every man according to his deeds: To them, who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, Rom. ii. 6—8.

Such only are in any meetness for the future happiness. All that enter into the heavenly state, are wrought and formed for it beforehand, attuned to the work and enjoyments of it. Otherwise it would be unnatural and unpleasant. Pleasure results from the harmony between the object and the faculty. What are the most beautiful colours to a blind man, or the most melodious sounds to the deaf ear? What are pearls to swine? So, what can there be relishing in a holy God, holy employment, holy society, to a soul dead in trespasses and sins? A soul not formed to the Christian temper and life, would find heaven, if he could gain admission there, a tasteless disagreeable state; he would be out of his element; all about him would be his aversion. And the great God will never admit such an unnatural preposterous thing, as that any should be with him who hate him, and who cannot with the temper that prevails in them be made happy by God! A heaven therefore must be begun in us by the exercise of the Christian life, before we can truly desire that heaven hereafter which God hath set before us; and especially before we

can

can have any solid expectation of being allowed a share.

3. What ground have Christians, in all the difficulties of their race and warfare, to solace themselves with that which awaits them at the end! How short are the difficulties! At farthest but thro' a short life on earth; which comparatively is *but for a moment*. How near the recompence in the beginning of it! How great in the consummation, so as to make full amends, abundantly beyond proportion, for any pains or struggle, any self-denial or suffering in the course of our obedience! Eye therefore the joy set before you, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

4. Let this thought induce Christians not only to submission, but even to thankfulness, upon the removal of their pious friends; especially when they are gathered into the garner like a shock of corn fully ripe. Such are where they would be; where God would have them to be; and where, if you are Christians, you would chuse to be your selves ere long; for no genuine Christian would live here always, if he was left to his own choice. Tho' it is impossible, but that excellent persons must be a loss to survivors whenever removed, at least as to their prayers and examples; yet when the pleasure of God is signified by their dismissal, it is much more becoming Christians to be thankful, that they were enjoyed so long, and that God has *let them depart in peace and enter into rest*, when they had finished their work; than to indulge sorrow for our own disadvantage.

Such

Such a person our aged deceased friend was, as I verily believe; and I apprehend not one Christian who knew her has the least doubt of it: And in such circumstances of declining nature she is gone to her rest.

In some cases the less we say of the dead, the better; where their characters are doubtful, or suspected, or at most no better than just to give ground for hope concerning them in the judgment of charity. But when persons of distinguishing piety thro' life, of an even course of exemplary walking thro' the several periods of life, of a commendable behaviour for many graces and virtues; with few known allays; when such, I say, die out of our world; I cannot think it improper, but of the most beneficial tendency to the living, and much for the honour and service of religion, to bring their excellences upon the publick stage, to excite and encourage other Christians by some account of their lives and of their deaths; that by both they may yet speak to the living: Especially I would rejoice to bear record to this, when they have a good report of all men, and of the truth it self; and especially to a congregation, where there are so many living witnesses of a person's real worth.

Mrs. *Anne King* was descended of eminently pious ancestors. Her great-grandfather Mr. *Thomas Gouge*, as he was a gentleman of rank, so also of singular piety in the reign of Queen *Elizabeth*. Her grandfather, Dr. *William Gouge*, in whose house she was born, was many years minister of *Black-friars* in this city; a person of as eminent reputation among all serious Christians in his time for ministerial abilities, strict piety,

and indefatigable labours for the good of souls to old age, as most ministers that ever were in this city. * His son, the famous Mr. *Thomas Gouge*, her uncle, ejected from *St. Sepulchre's* church in this city at the fatal *Bartholomew*, was as eminent for going about doing good, as most men since the apostles days; whose character was justly given from the pulpit and the press by the great and good Archbishop *Tillotson*. Her mother was his eldest sister, married to a very worthy minister also, Mr. *Richard Roberts*, Brother to Sir *William Roberts* of *Wilsden* in *Middlesex*, Barr. He was ejected for Nonconformity at the same time from *Culsdon* in *Surrey*; of whom Dr. *Calamy* has given some account. From these she descended; and a disgrace it would be to her memory, to mention such worthies to whom she was related, if she had degenerated from them. But the faith, which first dwelt in them, conspicuously appeared in her also, so as to keep up the true religious honour of the line.

She was religious betimes; and maintained an uniform course of exemplary goodness to the hoary head, in the instances suited to her station and condition.

Her devotion to God was regular and eminent. She was a strict observer of times of retirement. In her family, if her consort was absent, she always kept up the worship of God herself. For her careful attendance upon publick worship, you are witnesses of it, as far as she possibly could, even to the infirmities of old age and till near her end.

* See Mr. *Jenkyn's* funeral Sermon for him, 4to. 1654.

Her conduct in her family, as a wife, as a parent, as a mistress, were so well known to them to whom she stood in those relations; that, as they rise up and call her blessed, so their hearty and general sorrow for the loss of her, even in old age, is a plain expression of their sentiments.

Her peculiar affection was directed by her apprehension of the image of God in any. Neither difference of sentiments in lesser things, nor a disproportion of condition in life, were set by her in the balance with the substantial branches of real holiness. Some, who had been her *servants*, had a high place in her esteem and regard, where real piety was conspicuous. And yet, Her behaviour towards *all* was kind and obliging, dispassionate, most free from censoriousness, and such as procured the esteem of all that knew her.

She had her share in afflictions; but shewed that composure, submission to God, and contentment in all, which was highly worthy of one devoted to God, and satisfied in him as her portion.

Her *last moments* were answerable to the even, unaffected course of her life. She was suddenly seized with racking pains, which produced a violent fever. In this case she prayed to God, that he would mitigate her pains: *But if not, says she, here I am, let him do with me what seemeth him good.* In her whole sickness she maintained a happy calm, only desiring faith and patience to hold out to the end: Often saying, that *God had promised never to leave her, nor did he.* When asked, how she did! her answer

was generally; *As God saw fit that she should be.* Once in a time of most extreme pain, she said, *Will the Lord cast off for ever? Are his mercies clean gone?* But presently check'd herself, saying, *Be still, and know that I am God.*

A few days before she died, she seemed to feel an abatement of the distemper; and waking so, was full of praise to God, saying, *She could not express her gratitude.* She was continually blessing, and praying for, her children when they were near her; and blessing God, that he had given her a good hope thro' grace, and that he had enabled her to follow them who thro' faith and patience were then inheriting the promises.

She mentioned her eldest daughter with great pleasure; who died in the year 1688, a most uncommon instance of eminent piety in life and death at the age of 13; of whom one of my worthy predecessors, Mr. Oaks, has given a particular account in a sermon, which he preached and published upon occasion of her death, on the same text which has been now recommended to me upon occasion of the mother's decease. Mrs. King spoke with pleasure, how comfortably she had parted with that excellent daughter; how she had prayed to God to be her mother's everlasting support, adding, *So he will.*

When the pains of death were strong upon her, she said with a well-pleased countenance, *Oh how sweet is glory!* Which were her last words, that could be distinctly heard: Tho' the cheerful serenity of her spirit appeared to the last by frequent smiles; till death did its office, and landed her I doubt not in Abraham's bosom, in the 78th year of her age.

With

With what cheerfulness may *Relatives* receive the providence of such a person's release! How few, when their friends are removed, have so good ground for a firm belief, that they finished well? You have enjoyed the benefit of such a relative far longer than most are allowed to do. Of whatever advantage she was to you, she was what God made her; and he still lives and is the same; and will be with you in the way of duty, as he was with her. The benefit of her instructions, example and prayers will, if it be not your own fault, survive her. And if you hope, that she is entered upon the Christian's reward, the like reward is in reserve also for you, if you love Christ's appearing.

You, her aged, now bereaved consort, are in the course of nature, and by growing infirmities, likely soon to follow. May God be with you to the end, and enable you also to finish your course with joy.

You, her children, I hope will shew the good effect of having such a parent, and such a number of pious ancestors and relations for many descents, almost down from the Reformation. May you and yours keep up the honour of the family by an eminency in serious piety, which was the greatest honour of them that went before you; and so in due time meet them in the heavenly inheritance.

Let the ancient members of this Society, who have long come up with her to the house of God in this place, be put in mind by her departure of their own near approaching; that they may also leave a good testimony for God behind them.

And

And let the young, that are springing up in the stead of those who are gone and going off the stage, be careful to maintain the same spirit of serious religion and the same circumspect walking, such a care of private devotion and family worship, as was, I doubt, more conspicuous in the good people of the former generation, than in most of those who pass for such now. This will make our present worshipping assemblies the glory of Christ, nurseries for a future seed to serve him; and we may hope for more of his presence among us.

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